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INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DIVISION

WEEKLY SUMMARY NO. 25

For week ending 27 June 1950

Volume III

The International Week

Facing its most severe test to date, the UN took quick and determined action designed to halt the Communist invasion of South Korea.

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Security Council action on Korea. For the first time in history, the UN Security Council has approved the use of force to implement a UN resolution. This decision shows that under proper leadership, the UN can take strong action for peace and security without the USSR. In fact only the absence of the USSR enabled the UN to take that quick and decisive action originally envisaged by the authors of the UN Charter. Because Soviet obstructionism has thus far blocked conclusion of agreements under Article 43 requiring member nations to place armed contingents at the disposal of the Council, the SC found itself without any police force on which to call. It therefore in effect accepted the offer of the US to furnish armed aid and confined itself to recommending that UN members furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea in repelling the attack. Under the exigencies of the situation, the UN took the only positive course open to it.

To insure wide support it is important that world opinion should recognize that US armed action in Korea has been adopted by the SC as appropriate support of the UN. Unfortunately the resolution was adopted with the minimum seven votes required under the Charter. Maintaining that they had been unable to obtain instructions, India and Egypt failed to vote. The impressiveness of the decision as an expression of the judgment of mankind would be considerably enhanced if the subsequent concurrence of India and Egypt could be added. As it now stands, the seven votes in support of the resolution emanated from the US, countries already linked to the US under regional treaties and the Chinese Nationalist government.

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In the case of the Chinese Nationalists, the additional circumstance that at the request of President Truman, they have renounced all naval or air attacks against the Chinese mainland further weakens their moral authority to speak for China in the UN. While these factors in no way affect the validity of the action taken, they are certain to furnish ammunition to Communist propaganda.

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Korean attack reduces chances of Soviet return to UN. The Soviet sponsored attack on South Korea, strongly suggests that the Kremlin is indifferent about ending its boycott of the UN. Correlatively UN reaction to the North Korean breach of the peace has created new conditions which make a Soviet return to the UN much more difficult.

Until the attack on the ROK, the Security Council had studiously avoided provoking the USSR and had in fact confined itself to routine and desultory action. But just as the Soviet and Chinese recognition of the Ho Chi Minh regime in Indochina seemed almost deliberately designed to forestall French recognition of Peiping, the decision on the North Korean attack must have taken into account the probability that the SC would take some action against the P'yongyang government and that one effect would be to postpone indefinitely the seating of the Chinese Communists.

Probably the vigor of the UN's reaction has exceeded the Soviet expectations. By its quick and resolute decision to resist communist aggression, the Security Council has indicated that it is in no mood to appease the USSR. The temper of the UN hardly improves the chances for seating the Peiping representatives, nor has it created conditions which will facilitate a Soviet return to the UN.

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Eritrean security problem faces UN. The possibility that a 2/3 majority in the UN General Assembly might support a direct UN trusteeship for Eritrea leading to eventual independence raises the important issue of security in East Africa. The wave of Shifita terrorism in the territory shows no signs of abating and would be expected to increase in the face of any UN decision unfavorable to Ethiopia. An extension of terrorism might lead to general instability in East Africa.

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It is unclear where the necessary local defense forces will come from under a direct UN administration, aided by an Advisory Council of states, which is proposed by two of the five-member UN Commission of Inquiry. The Eritrean question will be debated shortly in the GA's Interim Committee, and security aspects of the problem may be neglected due to the tremendous popular appeal of independence within ten years.

Such a solution would be opposed by the UK and US, but any practical alternative must be acceptable to both Italy and Ethiopia, who are as yet unable to resolve their differences over this question. The only likely compromise yet broached is a form of federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia under the crown of the Emperor. Advocates of this alternative may have to point out more urgently than hitherto the nature of the grave security problem which will face Eritrea and the UN should a decision largely motivated by an emotional appeal fail to provide necessary defense forces for territorial security.

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